

HOW LUTON TOWN LOST AN INVALUABLE POINT

Tremendous Disparity Of The Teams

(By CRUSADER)

LUTON TOWN 0
MILLWALL ATH. 0

LUTON: Coen; King, Dunsmore; Finlayson, Dreyer, Roberts; Carroll, Redfern, Billington, Connelly, Stephenson.

MILLWALL: Yuill; Smith (E), Williams; Daniels, Chiverton, Forsyth; Rawlings, Richardson, Walsh, Barker, Osman.

Referee: S. E. Law, West Bromwich.

"When the fruit is scarcest the taste is sweetest," says an old Irish proverb.

And there is nothing like a rough wind when the blossom is setting to denude the fruit market.

There was a rough wind at Luton on Saturday, and it remained long enough to play a real spoiling game, so much so that it all but blew into the Never-Never Land the prospects of First Division football in Luton next season.

A bare chance remains—very bare, for the loss of a point to Millwall returned Luton to the same position as they were before their great victory at Chesterfield. Now it is a question of waiting for one of the other teams with an excellent chance to lose ground, or to lose twice as much as Luton have lost, and even then Luton cannot afford to lose any more.

THE SPOILER

It would require a long sitting of the Meteorological Society, with Boreas himself in the chair, to persuade me that the wind was not Millwall's twelfth and best unit.

Had there been a calm day the firm going would not have saved Millwall, for there was plenty of good football about the Town, quite enough to prove conclusively that Millwall were not in the same class as a football side.

There was a tremendous disparity between the teams in the matter of skill, for it made little difference whether the Town had the wind behind them or in front of them, they were attacking for fully eighty of the ninety minutes.

TWENTY CORNERS

How many corners they forced I have not an idea, but if I put it at a round figure of twenty I shall not be far out in the estimate. How many times the Millwall players kicked the ball into touch I do not know, either, but if I put it at six times the number of times the Town did so, again I shall not be far out.

But even so, I am not blaming Millwall for doing that. They had one purpose when they came to Luton—to prevent Luton winning, and, if Fortune could run to it, to manage a win. They reaped what must have been a surprise to them not less than to the twenty thousand spectators and to a million outside the immediate circle of interest.

CLEANEST MATCH

In saying so much I am also going to say that this was probably the cleanest match between the two teams that has taken place within the memory of any supporter of either team.

There was one rather bad foul in the first half, and one or two ridiculous spasms of pettishness by Walsh, the Millwall centre-forward, but otherwise the game, robust enough to please anyone, was conducted in a truly sporting spirit, and though we all had to grit our teeth now and then through disappointment, it cannot be said that we had cause to deplore anything in the game save the loss of a point.

That good spirit was the best consolation we had. Two or three supporters were inclined to rate the Town forwards for their indecision in front of goal. One might do so, but then it appeared to me during that hectic period in the first half when the timber of the Millwall goal was smitten three times that there was that intangible but none the less frustrative element of luck nullifying all the efforts of the Town.

GOOD LUCK

Often I have said there is no such thing as luck, but what I have meant is that there is no such thing as bad luck, for when things go wrong for one they usually are working for the salvation of another, and that was in this instance the Millwall defence. At half-time I had almost lost hope of a goal, and with one or two of the Town players showing a disposition to dribble too much in the danger zone I felt that it was possible that Millwall would snatch a victory.

That pessimistic view was not fulfilled, thank goodness, but it was a mere crumb to a healthy appetite, and there

were nearly twenty thousand likewise sent empty away.

THE TOWN ATTACK

It is with full sympathy for the frequent occasions on which their plans were foiled by sheer accident that I say the Town forwards were disappointing.

The Millwall defence, reinforced by the fickle breeze, was good, splendid, but should have been beaten. There was hesitation at vital moments, and more than ever I say that there is need of better and more accurate marksmanship in the Town attack generally. Every player put in all he had, but Billington was in need of some closer help from his inside forwards, though both Redfern and Connelly displayed a control and command of the ball in the open that established them as the two slickest forwards on the field.

Stephenson might have had much more help, and some of the passes that went to Carroll might have been given to the left wing with more advantage, but on the whole the attack, apart from the lack of strong finishing when at grips with the Millwall defence, played splendid football.

AT HALF

Finlayson and Roberts were brilliant, the captain especially being at his best.

None could have done more to marshal his forces and to keep a real hold on the opposition. Roberts was easily the best half-back on the field, and Finlayson a close second. Dreyer was good enough for his task again. His tackling was shrewd and forceful, and he made good use of the ball, but I hope he is not going to fall into the habit of dribbling in his own penalty area. There are already enough doing that without him falling to the temptation.

King and Dunsmore were sound, the kicking and tackling of each being splendid, and Coen had such a thin time that he must have felt more than anyone else on the field the bitterness of the wintry blast that mingled with the sunshine.

MILLWALL'S DEFENDERS

Millwall's defence took all the honours, but just where to begin to analyse I hardly know, for there were so many defenders that it is difficult to pick them out.

For most of the game Walsh, Rawlings and Osman were standing on the half-way line awaiting the big kicks from the rear. When they received they but rarely found a way to Luton's goal, so firmly were they held.

Richardson and Barker were as often in their own penalty area as they were in Luton's half, and especially in the second period when by all the ordinances of the game they should have been attacking, for they had the wind at their backs. But that proves the straits to which the Millwall team were put, and yet one cannot withhold any praise from them for their stern and resolute resistance.

THE REARGUARD

Yuill kept goal splendidly, but he must have been immensely surprised half a dozen times during the game to see that the ball had not landed in the net. Both the backs were big, strong and hard workers for every minute of the struggle. They kicked like mules, and their heads must have ached by the number of times they butted the ball away.

Chiverton laid himself out to stop Billington, and he shadowed the centre-forward very closely. That is why I would have liked the Town inside wingers to have gone through more often. But never have I seen so many men kept on the run in defence this year.

Forsyth played finely as usual, but so little was seen of the forwards that one could not say there was a good player, or even a bad player among them, though I feel like saying that Walsh would benefit by a course of football in the instructional classes for footballers, if the curriculum includes the control of one's feelings and restriction of the habit of rushing at opponents instead of the ball.

NOT A GOAL

As there was not a goal, there is no need to comment on the play further, except to say that Stephenson, Carroll and Dunsmore each struck the same up-right within the space of a few minutes. Billington once knocked the ball out of Yuill's hands, and then just failed to put it into the net, though I believe it would have landed there but for the gusty breeze.

Millwall's one and only real chance came when Walsh was given a pass early in the game; Coen ran out, but the centre-forward lifted the ball well over the bar.

Attendance, 20,205; receipts, £1,202 4s.